

mation that could save hundreds of millions later on. Officials view it as part of the function of the Defense basic research program to support these risky projects which an agency like the NSF, not so closely aware of potential practical applications, is likely to be unwilling to support. There seems to be substantially less of the "that's been tried before and it isn't going to work" attitude in Defense than in NSF, and the Defense officials argue that that is precisely the way it should be.

Congressional Recess: Some Matters Left Undecided until August

There has been a great deal of speculation over the exact reason for the Congressional recess and even more over what the postconvention session will accomplish. The only precedent is the 1948 session Harry Truman called in order to dramatize his charges about the "do-nothing" 80th Congress. That session accomplished nothing of significance, since the Republicans who controlled it understandably had no intention of carrying out Truman's program. This time the situation is very different: the session is being called on the initiative of the party that controls the Congress, and the Democrats will necessarily be making a determined effort to make at least a start toward carrying out the program of their newly adopted platform.

During the closing hours before the recess, both houses adopted the conference report on Independent Agency appropriations (*Science*, 1 July 1960). This included \$175.8 million for the National Science Foundation and \$915 million for the Space Agency. Both houses also cleared the "Health for Peace" proposal. Action was put off until August on the HEW appropriation with its big proposed increase in funds for medical research, and on the Antarctic treaty, which in effect internationalizes the Antarctic, outlawing the establishment of military bases there and opening the entire continent to the scientific expeditions of all nations.

One thing that is certain is that federal support of scientific research and development will reach a new high in the fiscal year that began 1 July. It will run close to \$9 billion, substantially more than the total of all nonfederal support for R & D and triple the pre-sputnik level prevailing before fiscal 1958—H.M.

News Notes

Eugenics in New Guinea

A plan to introduce a eugenic policy, apparently without precedent anywhere, has just been announced by the administration of the Territory of New Guinea [*South Pacific Post* (24 May 1960)]. This measure affects the tribe of Fore, some 30,000 strong, which inhabits an area of about 884 square miles in the Eastern Highlands. Almost half of the women and one-tenth of the men of the Fore tribe die of a hereditary disease known as kuru. This is a grave neuropathological disturbance for which no cure is known and which leads to death, usually within a few months from the appearance of the first symptoms.

As shown by studies conducted in the Fore area by a group of investigators from the University of Adelaide (South Australia), kuru is transmitted by a gene which behaves apparently as a Mendelian dominant in females and a recessive in males. The presumed homozygotes of both sexes die in childhood, usually before adolescence; heterozygous females die later, after most of them have produced children. The extremely high incidence of kuru in the Fore tribe and its absence in neighboring tribes except as introduced by migrants from the Fore area remain unexplained. The heterozygous carriers of the gene for kuru probably possess some considerable adaptive advantage, both the males who survive and perhaps also the females who die after having completed at least a part of their reproductive lives. The nature of this advantage is, however, completely unknown.

In part because of the ravages of kuru, some portions of the Fore tribe have great excesses of males over females (as much as 2.5 males per female). Fore men tend to move into neighboring tribes, and some of them, like members of tribes in which kuru is unknown, come as contract laborers to work on plantations in other parts of New Guinea. Since many of them are heterozygous carriers of the gene for kuru, it is feared that the disease may spread and afflict the populations of other districts.

To counteract this danger, the administration's plan is to quarantine the Fore tribe, by prohibiting the emigration of its members from the tribal

area. All Fore men who have been recruited as laborers from the area will be returned there. This is obviously a severe restriction to be imposed on a whole tribe. Realizing this, the administration is considering ways and means of developing the Fore area to provide work for its people and to make emigration unnecessary. The study of the disease is to be continued, in the hope of finding a remedy for kuru victims and a way of identifying the carriers of the kuru gene in heterozygous condition before the appearance of the disease symptoms.

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Documentation Center Opened

A Scandinavian Documentation Center (SCANDOC) was opened recently in Washington, D.C., to further the exchange of scientific and technical information and documentation among the Scandinavian countries, the United States, and Canada. SCANDOC, a non-profit organization offering free service, is financed and directed by the research councils and scientific academies of the four Scandinavian countries through their common Scandinavian Council for Applied Research.

The center will procure nonclassified and nonconfidential documents and information not readily available and will channel this information to the interested countries through information offices organized under the research councils and academies of the countries concerned. Arne Sverdrup, former head of the Laboratory for Steroid Research of the Norsk Hydro's Institute for Cancer Research, Oslo, will head SCANDOC. Sverdrup is also science attaché at the Norwegian Embassy.

Dedication of NIH Building

The Division of Biologics Standards Building of the National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, Md., was dedicated on 30 June. Roderick Murray, director of the division, delivered the principal address, which commemorated the fifth anniversary of the creation of the division as a separate unit of NIH.

The \$3.5 million structure was designed to house the scientific and ad-